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ABSTRACT

This document calls attention to some of the interesting institutional and administrative characteris of universities. Eight background propositions are suggested; (1) Universities are a special kind of public political institution. (2) Universities will increasingly be subject to political pressures, crosscurrents, and conflict. (3) There are those in the university and outside who say the university should not be concerned with social change or playing a positive role in this change. (4) As a public political institution, universities must increasingly be responsive to social and economic change. (5) These and other characteristics of a university provide a backdrop for consideration of how universities are, should be, or should not be administered. (6) Within the United States the early political science doctrine of the separation of powers based on federalism has done irreparable damage to common perceptions about the role of professors, administrative officers, trustees, students, and other groups at the university, (7) Political science doctrine about elections, representation, and voting have also had a deleterious effect on university administrative processes. (8) The dual character of organization is a distinctive characteristic of most universities. A model for comparative analysis and a discussion of the necessity of modernization are included. (MJM)

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

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In the past, university governance and administration have received little empirical study. Universities traditionally have not been subjected to the rigorous administrative evaluation applied to other public institutions. As a result not much of practical guidance has been written about university organization, administrative processes, and management.

Historical Perspective

This oversight may be due to the conventional attitudes about universities of those outside their walls and to the desire of those inside to maintain self-serving privileges and processes. Three ideas nurtured over several hundred years have contributed to this isolation of universities from administrative research and reform.

The first is the monastic character of early universities which fostered a tradition of self-governance. This concept of academy nurtured in turn both the assumption that precise processes and rules of conduct are inappropriate and the notion that judgments and decisions about purposes, processes, and behavior can properly be made in a company of scholars only by peers. The fiefdom protected by these ideas gave those who attained full status in the academic institution the privilege of teaching, writing, and speaking out on any subject with immunity.

The insulation of universities from public surveillance and examination had legitimate origins and, in certain respects, still does. As centers of inquiry into new fields of knowledge and as instruments for puncturing closely held myths, academic institutions have always been threats to the conservators of privilege and tradition. If professors could be charged with heresy or branded as public enemies for any unpopular hypothesis or finding, the entire society would suffer. Protection was imperative and, within limits, still is.

However, the role of universities is changing everywhere in different stages and with varying pace. In most countries access to academia is no longer limited to a small elite. In high income countries and wherever opportunity for the deprived is a goal, admission for degree study is usually open to all who can show competence, with financial assistance available to those who lack funds.

Fields of study and service have multiplied greatly. Responding to public and private needs, universities have become producers of many new kinds of educated persons and the source of much of the knowledge explosion. The service character of this social response changes the university from a sanctuary for scholars to a public participant in national and community life.

Even if some immunities are appropriate, why should universities be free from comparative study both among themselves and among all kinds of public institutions? Academic institutions, like other complex organizations, are beset with problems of structure, planning, policy-making, program determination, staffing, mobilization of resources, evaluation, and other administrative elements. Why have political scientists, public administrators, management specialists, sociologists, and other researchers given only meager attention to the problems of organization and management of universities?

The purpose of this commentary is to call attention to some of the interesting institutional and administrative characteristics of universities. I hope that this will encourage more intensive study of these characteristics, particularly on a comparative basis, both among universities and between them and other kinds of public organizations.

Background Propositions

For provocative purposes, I should like to suggest a number of characteristics and propositions which condition comparative study of universities. Some of these were developed in a doctoral seminar on Comparative University Administration which I have taught for two years. The seminar examines traditional models and new variations of English, French, and American universities, as well as some of the patterns found in Latin America and the Far East.

The considerable differences in university systems make generalizations difficult, but unique similarities give them some validity. Terminology also differs from country to country. I have tended to use terms characteristic of American universities. Even within the United States, one finds great diversity in matters of functions, governance, and procedure. Keeping these problems in mind, we may consider the following propositions.

First, universities are a special kind of "public-political institution." In this context a university is in all essential elements a public social institution whether it is controlled and funded by a government or is a chartered private institution. This fact automatically brings it into the realm of the political.

Universities have been steadily moving from the periphery of society to the center of national and community life. They are equally important to the achievement of both governmental and personal goals. They have developed enormous influence in shaping the form, character, and values of society. Professor Dwight Waldo thinks they are the most "authoritative" institutions in the allocation of values. This is in part due to their role as a major legitimizing agency in society.

This authoritative role is evidenced by four important characteristics:

(a) Universities are key agencies in the conservation, development, and propagation of culture.

(b) They are at the center of professionalization.

(c) They are the producers, organizers, and dispensers of knowledge in all of its explosive manifestations. These three features are developed in Ortega y Gasset's splendid essay, "Mission of a University."

(d) A comprehensive university with a full range of professional schools or faculties is the only institution in which all the diverse fields of knowledge and skills can be mobilized to study complex societal problems.

Second, universities will increasingly be subject to political pressures, crosscurrents, and conflict. For some this is a new experience; others have been in the center of controversy within living memory. Strikes, sit ins, and riots are worldwide phenomena; more rational processes of adjudication of disputes must be found.

Recognizing this increasing public-political character, individuals and groups of students and faculty members will push the university to become an advocate—the intervener—in social and political causes about which they feel strongly. They may become more sophisticated in pleading their case, with less use of violence, although the ability to become recognized and make the headlines has a "heady" quality.

It is thus necessary to define clearly the purposes or functions of a university and to determine how the institution may be safeguarded and supported to serve these purposes.

Third, there are those in the university and outside who say the university should not be concerned with social change or playing a positive role in this change. This is a conservative or reactionary view. Professors who hold this view would say "what is good for the university (meaning themselves) is good for the nation." Other professors hide behind the shield of tenure and academic freedom in promoting their self-interests, just as some businessmen espouse the cause of free enterprise as a shield for engaging in socially deleterious practices.

Few universities have yet found a way to give priority to the public interest in contrast to letting professors and faculties do what they like for their own ends. President Robert Gordon Sproul of the University of California once commented that "most instructors want to light a candle and go exploring in other peoples' attics just to see what they could find."

Fourth, as public-political institutions, universities must increasingly be responsive to social and economic change. Theirs is the critical role of providing the knowledge and competencies necessary for societal advance. In fulfilling this role, a university has a highly pluralistic mission.

A university molded as a political organization cannot fulfill a pluralistic mission. Without such a mission, freedom of inquiry—academic freedom and the search for truth—becomes a mockery. Nothing can be taught, studied, or disseminated which does not serve a political or ideological purpose. Indeed this is what happens by accretion when members of faculties start passing resolutions on political issues.

By its very nature and name a university must implicitly be concerned with objective facts, principles, scientific hypotheses, and the discovery of rational alternatives. To this end it must depolarize extremist views, half-truths, and emotional dogmas.

Fifth, these and other characteristics of a university provide a backdrop for consideration of how universities are, should be, or should not be administered.

Universities on the whole have been poorly organized and administered to fulfill their missions. I have often referred to them as the final hold-out against application of modern management techniques. One reason why they have been impervious to modernization as compared with other kinds of organizations is their uniqueness: they are the only kind of "mental institution" administered entirely by their "inmates." Instead of paying attention to what schools of education, business, or public administration might have to teach about management, most professors assume that administrative knowledge is intuitive.

Sixth, Within the United States the early political science doctrine of the separation of powers based on federalism has done irreparable damage to common perceptions about the roles of professors, administrative officers, trustees, students, and other groups at the university. This concept has led to

efforts to define separable powers and functions precisely for each group, with resultant exacerbation of relationships.

The notion that chancellors, rectors, presidents, deans, department heads, or trustees have a lot of power is usually a myth. Authority capriciously exercised does not last long unless a university is politicized or impotent. Decisions must be viewed as institutional products with administrators as leaders and guardians of the process. In the governing process, no single individual or collegial group, short of the highest government body, should have the authority for final decision without the possibility of appeal and review, except on strictly academic matters.

Seventh. Political science doctrine about elections, representation, voting, and Roberts' Rules of Order have also had a deleterious effect on university administrative processes. The assumption is widely held that the way to resolve issues is to give representatives voting power. Professors and students tend to assume that they have no power unless they can vote. They fail to recognize the potency of speaking up at all stages of the decision process. The principal role of hierarchy in modern organization is to facilitate communication, consultation, and participation.

The temptation is to insist that participation or views cannot be expressed effectively unless there is a formal council or other organized structure in which each person or representative has a vote. This is the road to polarization and frustration.

Eighth. The dual character of organization is a distinctive characteristic of most universities. Except in institutions administered entirely by collegial organs, two overlapping and interacting systems of organization are found. One is the hierarchy of individual professors, department heads, deans, vice-presidents or provosts, presidents, and trustees in whatever manner these persons are titled. The other is the hierarchy of departmental faculties, school or division faculties, total faculty, and representative senates or councils.

The manner in which functions, initiatives, and authorities are allocated between these two organizational systems and processes of interaction vitally affects the responsiveness and effectiveness of the university as an institution. Where the collegial organization is dominant, administration is impaired. Where general and academic administrators are strong and fail to involve collegial organs effectively, the results are equally unsatisfactory.

After examining a variety of universities of different types and systems, my students came to the conclusion that their responsiveness to social change and needs is inversely related to the degree of academic self-governance, e.g., collegial administration.

Model for Comparative Analysis

Before examining different university systems and individual institutions within those systems, we need to develop a schedule of elements or a model. Below are the headings of a model that finally emerged from my seminars. We developed profiles for English, French, and American universities based on this model. We applied it also to universities in Japan, Chile, and Nigeria.

1. The mission of the university: purpose, goals, and commitments in respect to:
   a. Learning, development, and dissemination of knowledge in the academic disciplines;
   b. Mastery, development of knowledge and skill, and advancement of standards of professions;
   c. Conservation and enhancement of culture;
   d. Service to society.
2. The nature of the legal instruments or charter establishing the institution.
3. The constituency and role of the body of "ultimate general authority" in legitimizing the exercise of powers granted to the university.
4. The character, membership, source of appointment, and functions of "the governing agency" (and its titular head) responsible and accountable for maintaining oversight and control of the policies, programs, personnel, funds, and properties of the university, if different from the body of ultimate general authority.
5. The nature, method of appointment, term, powers, duties, and relationships of the "chief academic/administrative officer."
6. The "general collegial academic body" which advises,

THE 1974 GUIDE

The Management Division has recently published the 1974 edition of the *Guide to Professional Development Opportunities for College and University Administrators.* This is a listing of about 150 seminars, workshops, conferences, internships, and fellowships designed to improve management skills. Single copies are free from the Management Division.

Erratum and Omission:

Page 121 of the *Guide* states that applications for the Washington Internship in Education Program are due by the end of January. The closing date for applications for this program is in fact 1 March.

We heard too late of one program to include it in the *Guide.* This program is on Facilities Management Systems and Inventory Techniques (INSITE), sponsored by the M.I.T. Planning Office. The dates are 24-28 June, 1974, at M.I.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Tuition for the program is $400 plus room and board at an MIT dormitory ($60 for single men and women, $80 for couples, and $15 for children between 6 and 14). The Program is intended especially for space planners and managers, investors, designers, and users. Emphasis will be placed on: (1) developing a working understanding of fundamental ideas and procedures in facilities management and (2) applying them to actual facilities management problems. Application forms are available from Prof. James Austin, Director, Summer Session Office, E19-356, Cambridge, MA 02139.

recommends, or exercises final authority over academic matters and, to a greater or lesser extent, over administrative, student, and fiscal affairs.

7. The administrative structure for academic programs, academic support activities, research, student affairs, finance, properties, and other functions.
8. The method of appointing or electing deans or other heads of schools, faculties, divisions, departments, or other instructional units, and the administrative responsibilities performed by these persons.
9. The method, qualifications, and status gained in appointing and promoting academic personnel and the process for determining responsibilities, evaluating performance, and disciplining members.
10. The decision processes for: (a) academic policy, programs, and curricula; (b) student admissions and standards; (c) budget formulation, resolution, and implementation; (d) development, approval, negotiation, and execution of research proposals.
11. The role, organization, method of election, and activities of student organizations and the opportunities for organized and individual participation in university bodies of governance and processes.
12. The sources of funding, the authority and process for preparing and determining budgets, the basis for allocating resources, and accounting and reporting procedures.
13. The role of, organization for, and methods of providing "service research," non-degree course work or training projects (extension/extramural), advisory services to public and private agencies, student services, placement assistance for students and alumni, and external relations.

Necessity of Modernization

These comparative aspects of university organization and administration are questions on which experts in public administration and political science should have much to contribute. We need to encourage more comparative study of these crucial matters.

During the past decade administrative theory and practice have developed greatly. New concepts and applications have been tested in many organizations in many countries. Notable advances have been made in analysis of such aspects as leadership roles, participatory processes, decision making, policy and program planning, legislative-executive relationships, administrative communications, program budgeting, program and administrative evaluation, personnel selection and management, institution building, and administrative reform and improvement.

Much of this experience is relevant to universities, so long as we recognize that the unique character of an academy with its special protections must condition its application. Surely institutions of higher education should not be immune from improved systems of governance and operation.

The low productivity of some institutions is shameful. The irresponsibility of many professors "for life," either in neglect of academia or in engaging in political or other inappropriate work, discredits the integrity of a whole institution. The inflexibility of many universities in modernizing curricula and in serving needs of students is the subject of jokes. It has been said that it is more difficult to secure agreement to change a curriculum than to move a cemetery. Appropriate as the analogy may be, the consequence to society of such inflexibility is no joking matter.

The most important and difficult dilemma in assuring institutional integrity on the one hand and social responsiveness on the other is to find a mechanism which assures both responsible leadership and accountability and freedom from political or ideological duress. Academic self-governance by a small elite must be tempered with arrangements and processes which facilitate internal responsiveness and capability to cope with continuous change. Citizens in all countries have a right to expect better institutional performance in return for public funding of higher education.

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